

REMARKS

Claims 21- 27, 31-33 and 38-42 have been finally rejected. Claims 21- 27, 33, 38 and 40-42 are again rejected under Section 102 based on Allon (U.S. 5,539,883), and claims 31, 32 and 39 are rejected under Section 103 based on Allon in view of Liu (U.S. 6,574,664).

A new objection was raised to claim 42 as “failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim.” Applicants request removal of this objection because the claim limitations do define features of the reconfigurable network in which the method is applied. If the Examiner disagree that this is appropriate subject matter which further limits the recitations of independent claim 41, then the Examiner is requested to provide citation to dispositive authority to support the objection.

Applicants have already amended the independent claims and argued allowability over the prior art applied in the final rejection with respect to all claims. The art rejections are again traversed. The following remarks are primarily directed to reasons why the independent claims are distinct and non-obvious. The Examiner is requested to reconsider the rejections in view of these distinctions.

Independent claim 21 describes a series of features which are not present in the prior art. Specifically the claim is directed to replacing a drive device in an automation network. The method includes operating the replacement drive device to identify for the replacement drive device the arrangement of connections in the network relative to the replacement drive device, in accord with a predefined hierarchy of the connections, and with a second device providing information regarding a relationship or order of the drive device with respect to the second device.

The replacement drive device of claim 21 is operated to identify a first of the nodes to which it is assigned, to identify other devices including the second device; and to receive information from the second device enabling the drive device to ascertain: the number of connections of the first node and a predefined hierarchy of the connections and the connection with which the replacement drive device is connected to the first node, and to determine for the first node other connections which are connected to other nodes or devices.

The rejection of claim 21 is in error because the Allon reference does not disclose (at col. 4, 47 – 52) “replacing the drive device with a replacement drive device” and only cites reference to establishing “new logical links between ... computers” if a computer fails. See again col. 4,

47 – 52. A computer is not a **drive** device and, even if it were, the reference also fails to disclose providing the arrangement wherein “a relationship or order of the drive device with respect to at least the second device is stored ...” The rejection cites col. 4, lines 16-23 and col. 5, lines 12-21. Although these passages may concern linking and forming links between computers, none of the disclosure involves storing “a relationship or order of the drive device with respect to at least the second device” **in** the data memory of storage of the second device. At best, the passages disclose establishing discrete links relative to a tree but the passages do not indicate where this information is stored. Nothing in the disclosure relates to providing a relationship of one drive device with respect to a second drive device. Instead, the reference describes provision of limited information stored in computers (not drive devices) as described at col. 5, lines 22 – 46. It is respectfully suggested that perhaps this passage was not cited in the rejection because it does not identify the claimed feature as one of the features stored in a computer.

Another distinction of claim 21 is that the replacement drive is operated to identify a node to which it is assigned and to identify other devices. The citation (col. 5, lines 3-21) only discloses efforts to re-link a computer when a node has failed. This is certainly not what is claimed and the examiner is invited to explain why it was thought that this passage met the claimed subject matter. For all of these reasons claim 21 is distinct and non-obvious over the prior art.

Independent claim 41 also defines patentable subject matter. For example, no combination of the prior art results in a reconfigurable network for which the claimed method identifies an order of devices in the network, thereby enabling determination of relative spatial arrangements among the devices. The method specifically requires, in a network configured according to a first hierarchical arrangement: a first of the devices performing a series of determinations including:

- determining a first of the nodes to which it is assigned,
- determining other devices upstream or downstream from the first device,
- determining the number of connections of the first node, the first hierarchical arrangement of the connections and nodes, and the connection with which the device is connected to the first node and
- determining for the first node other connections which are connected to other nodes or devices.

The first device of claim 41 thereby acquires, in accord with the first hierarchical arrangement, relationships among nodes and connections to which other devices are connected.

The rejection cites lines 16-31 of Allon, and it is believed the Examiner is referring to col. 4 of the Allon reference. Contrary to a conclusion drawn in the rejection, that passage does not disclose

“determining the number of connections of the first node, the first hierarchical arrangement of the connections and nodes, and the connection with which the device is connected to the first node”

and, in fact, that passage only describes the prior art wherein individual computers are organized in a tree structure. The passage does not disclose “a first of the devices” which determines the hierarchical arrangement of the connections and nodes. For this reason alone, the rejection of claim 41 must fail.

It is again also submitted that the dependent claims each further define patentable subject matter.

Conclusion

Based on the above amendments the application now presents allowable subject matter and the application is in condition for allowance. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any appropriate fees due in connection with this paper, including the fees specified in 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 (c), 1.17(a)(1) and 1.20(d), or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 19-2179.

Respectfully submitted,

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